

NEW
Artists
PRODUCTIONS
SCRAPBOOK

Developing performers

Sons' musical talent inspired mom to volunteer in youth theater

By Geneva Miller

Bandon residents and visitors who've come to appreciate live music and drama in the comfort of a professional theater have volunteers such as Anita Almich to thank.

The white-haired, youthful-looking Almich finds the energy for a multitude of projects. But any project she undertakes has to meet three self-imposed considerations.

"The first thing I consider before starting a project is my own interest level," Almich explained. "If I'm interested, the energy is self-sustaining."

In the last decade, Almich's work in nonprofit performing arts-related projects has earned her community respect. Her interest in performing arts was spurred by her sons.

"I was a jock," Almich said of her own childhood. "I was always the fourth member of the team when my three older brothers wanted to play."

In 1996, about a year after her eldest son began playing the clarinet, Almich accompanied him to an Oregon Coast Lab Band concert at a local Lions event.

"Michael sat reading a book," Almich recalled. "He never looked up once. But the next day he said, 'I'd like to join that group.'"

Michael and his brother Daniel performed with the Oregon Coast Lab Band throughout their middle and high school years. Almich observed that her sons' motivation to study music increased with the Lab Band's

regular performances.

"Anita is a very hard worker," said Lab Band director Greg Young. "She volunteered countless hours in booking and publicity and assisted in the organization of the group."

Young credits the Almichs for the Lab Band's logo design and assistance in creation of the Lab Band's premier ensemble, Evolution.

Almich earned undergraduate and masters degrees in engineering from the University of California Irvine, and worked 12 years in the engineering field. She and her husband, Dan, agreed to apply Anita's professional earnings toward an early retirement. In the spring of 1989, the couple retired on the same day. The next day, they moved to Bandon from Fullerton, Calif., with their two sons.

"I'm busier now than I ever was," Almich admitted.

The Almichs' first project in Bandon was to complete the interior of their home, including electrical wiring. When the Lions Club undertook building a theater in Bandon, Ray Kelley and Dan led the construction.

"Anita is very creative when it comes to project ideas," observed Kelley. "When Dan and I were building the (Sprague Community Theater), she was a great supporter and participant."

The entire Almich family spent time literally erecting the structure, hammering drywall and cleaning and installing seats.

■ See Almich, Page A8



Photo by Steve McCasland

Helping young artists learn

Anita Almich helps Jenevive Winchell during a New Artists Productions theater workshop, held the last two weeks of August. Almich and her husband, Dan, volunteer in arts-related projects.

Almich

■ from Page A1

"So many people and organizations came together for the betterment of the community. The Sprague theater is the major project of our lives — because it will last longer than we are here," Almich reflected.

Almich's second consideration before starting a new project includes delegating responsibilities and letting go of project management once the project is complete. After the Sprague opened, Anita and Dan were instrumental in bringing professional performers to town through the formation of Bandon Showcase, which has sponsored regular concerts at the Sprague theater since 2003. Almich maintains her position as trustee, but is not a current board member.

"Anita's an invaluable organizational member — undoubtedly one of the most efficient people I've ever met," said fellow Lions member Joe Sinko.

Community benefit is the third thing Almich considers before tackling a project and New Artists Productions, Inc. fits the bill. A nonprofit performing arts company that incorporates elementary and secondary youth theater troupes, New Artists Productions features the The High and Low Tide Players, both directed by the Almichs.

The High Tide Players was initiated by the Almichs after the high school drama department closed.

"If the project benefits the community, it has a positive impact on me," Almich said.

New Artists Production is founded on the premise that the South Coast area abounds with talented youths who need only an opportunity to be recognized.

Fifteen-year-old Clarissa Castaldi is one such youth. The Bandon High School sophomore has attended New Artists summer day camps and worked as a member of the stage crew for High and Low Tide Players. This summer, she joined the High Tide Players cast of Aladdin Jr., as a narrator and a chorus member.

"Anita and Dan are good directors," Clarissa said. "They must like it, because they keep producing shows for students. And we really appreciate it. We wouldn't have much opportunity otherwise."

New Artists has donated scholarship money to established local artists and student performers. This year, New Artists received a grant from the Coos County Cultural Coalition. The \$1,000 award was used to purchase new lighting equipment. Almich says the

equipment will be a useful tool in teaching students technical stagecraft skills.

Almich enjoys each new challenge she takes on, but has especially enjoyed working with children and theater.

"Guys and Dolls' is probably my favorite New Artists Production," Almich says of the 2005 show guest-directed by Sally Ford. "Guys and Dolls' was our first true musical, so everything about theater came together in that play. When we finish Aladdin, that will be our favorite," she said.

Aladdin Jr. opens Oct. 27 at the Sprague theater and continues two consecutive weekends in Coquille and Reedsport.

Frances Merriam, also an Aladdin narrator and chorus member, has performed at the Sprague on several occasions. Anticipating the musical's multi-city tour, Frances says, "It'll be cool to perform in new places. I'm very excited."

When asked if she has ever attempted a project that flopped, Almich just laughed and said, "Not that I'll share!"

(Geneva Miller is an educator, writer and musician. Her prose and poetry have appeared in a variety of literary and educational journals. She lives in Bandon with her husband and son.)

Devoted to kids

After retiring, Bandon couple found a second career in youth theater

By Lise Hull
Staff Writer

Nestled in woodland northeast of Bandon, a community of young actors and singers are learning skills to enchant audiences. Coaching them through their efforts are Dan and Anita Almich, who established New Artists Productions almost 10 years ago.

"New Artists is a great way to retire and have a vocation," Dan Almich said.

When the couple moved to Bandon about 20 years ago, neither had any experience with the production of theatrical shows. After their move, things "took on a life of their own." New Artists Productions has presented almost 40 shows and will be celebrating its 10th anniversary next year.

"We have learned that there are so many talented kids and giving families in our community," Anita Almich said. "I cannot tell you how many families plan



Photos by Amy Moss Strong

The Almichs

Anita and Dan Almich work on the set of the recent New Artists Productions show at the Sprague Community Theater.

the extracurricular schedules of their kids or their family vacation schedules around New Artists Productions. Their devotion to what we offer is beyond words."

Much of what the couple knows about producing and

directing shows has come from the "school of hard knocks." Before forming their own group, the Almichs supported the South Coast Lab Band, and for a time served as its publicity managers. They also worked with Sally Ford in the Bandon Playhouse, where they learned hands-on about directing, theater etiquette and designing and building sets.

They also have also studied a lot of books and brainstormed ideas with each other to see what might work out.

Having just completed "The Christmas Toyshop," which was directed by 12-year-old Jeneveve Winchell and 13-year-old Destyni Fuller and had a large cast with actors younger than 11, New Artists will be attempting more difficult plays in 2009.

"We have a lot of confidence that whatever we jump on is going to work," Dan said.

Anita believes New Artists Productions is as successful as it

■ See Almichs, Page A5



Photo by Amy Moss Strong

Directors at work

Dan and Anita Almich give direction to cast members for their recent show, "The Christmas Toyshop," at a rehearsal earlier this month at the Sprague Community Theater. Since retiring and moving to Bandon, the Almichs have devoted themselves to youth theater education through their program, New Artists Productions. They are joined onstage by Jeneveve Winchell and Destyni Fuller, who served as student directors for the production.

Almichs

■ from Page A1

is because of Dan's interests and talents.

Dan discovered that working as an aerospace engineer and director of market planning and research for Northrop Grumman provided excellent training for running a theater group.

As marketing director for Northrop Grumman, Dan managed the graphic arts and art department. After taking the job, his first goal was to learn as much as possible about his subordinates' work. He actually performed those jobs, in order to establish rapport and build solid relationships with them as their manager.

The effort helped him with creating whatever is needed for New Artists. And, he applies that same work ethic and rapport-building with the young performers.

"Our son Daniel and I follow his lead and try to keep up," Anita explained. "Dan gets an idea, develops a plan and starts working. The ultimate result is to involve as many kids as we can, testing their skills and talents to help them grow. The diversity of the activities we have invites more kids to become interested in the performing arts."

Anita also worked for Northrop Grumman, starting in 1977 as a computer analyst for defense weapons in the engineering department. She eventually transferred to the marketing department and reported to Dan. She worked there for two years before they were married and then

moved into the financial analysis department.

"Dan is great to work with," Anita said. "He lets me do what I do best for the program — publicity, scheduling and coordination of the kids, directing and observing."

Dan said his wife has a particular knack for writing applications to establish non-profit organizations, such as New Artists Productions.

Anita also creates most of the costumes for New Artists. For "Fiddler on the Roof Junior" she made 37 of the costumes from scratch. Her sewing room is chock-full with 100 boxes of material and many other items.

The Almichs are intimately involved with all aspects of the production of their shows, demonstrating to the young participants how to act, how to project their "playground voices" and where and how to stand on stage.

Dan says when the kids come to New Artists, they are often plagued with fear and have low self-worth, partly due to thinking that if they are not athletic, they are failures.

"Before they can develop self-confidence, they need to feel worthwhile," Dan said. "We try to get them to understand that they have value, no matter the part they play."

When they finally step into a theater, it's an entirely different world for them, Dan noted. "It's like magic."

"The end result of all that we do rests in our mission to help kids develop personal traits which will aid them

throughout life — self-esteem, self-confidence, self-awareness of their natural and developed talents," Anita added.

The couple spends a lot of time thinking of ways to help the kids grow.

Their annual summer camp helps participants learn acting and singing skills. They do drills and ball games and enjoy fun exercises, which build upon their talents.

They also go on special trips, take backstage tours of places such as the Egyptian Theatre in Coos Bay and to shows, such as "Phantom of the Opera," in Portland. (The couple paid for all the kids' tickets.) This summer, they might take a tour of the Angus Bowmer Theatre in Ashland.

Late in 2009, the Almichs hope to treat themselves to a cruise. The trip of a lifetime will take in four continents, including Europe, North Africa, South America and the Caribbean, before returning to Florida and back home to Bandon and New Artists Productions.

"I don't know if we will ever slow down," Anita said. "There are always things to do and new knowledge to gain."

"But," she added, "the best part of New Artists is the unconditional hugs Dan and I receive from kids."

Workshop fosters youths' input in 'Aladdin Junior'

By Steve McCasland

Thirty-plus youths ages 7 to 18 from Bandon, Coquille, Port Orford and North Bend will have a very real imprint on what audiences see and hear in New Artists Productions' staging of Disney's "Aladdin Junior."

The show, which opens at the Sprague Community Theater tomorrow night, travels for performances in Coquille and Reedsport, respectively, on the following two weekends.

Anita Almich, who, with her husband, Dan, founded New Artists, explained that the youths are doing their own makeup for the show and also had a hand in designing, creating and constructing the costumes, props and sets. The show's three Harem Girls choreographed their own dance routine. Two high school girls are running the show's lighting and sound.

"We had a two-week workshop in August called Summer Stock to Disney's 'Aladdin Junior,' during which we worked on acting, make-up, dance and movement, set design and construction, and costume and prop making," Almich said. "Stacey Galvin and Kellie Flynn of the Hair Club taught makeup techniques and explained how the approach to stage makeup differs from every day makeup."

The youths learned that they must seal their faces with an astringent before applying makeup, for example.

"Stage makeup is heavier and oilier, so you want a tight face to keep it out of the pores," said Almich. "And stage lighting tends to wash out ordinary levels of makeup, so actors' makeup must be applied heavier. The kids learned the important steps that they need to follow like a recipe — prepare the face, apply the foundation, the eyeshadow and then lipsticks — to transform themselves into their particular characters."

Jenna Winchell plays a parrot in



Photo by Amy Moss Strong

Telling a tale

Clarissa Castaldi, left, and other townswomen tell the audience the tales of Arabian nights in the opening scene of the New Artists Productions' show, "Aladdin Junior," which plays at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday and at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Sprague Community Theater.

the show, so her makeup must be multi-layered to get the coloration needed to represent feathers. Chelsea Hill plays the Genie, so her eyes and cheeks are heavily accented. Destyni Fuller plays Jafar, the villain, so her makeup is very dark,

with highlights on the eyes, eyebrows and chin.

"Dan photographed the characters while they were in makeup and gave them copies so they could go home and practice on their own," said Almich. "And, after practicing,



Contributed photo

Sound tech on duty

Tessa Fuller works at the soundboard as Dan Almich looks on during New Artists Productions' summer theater workshop "Summer Stock to Disney's 'Aladdin Junior'" in August.

they came up with suggestions about how they'd rather do it. That's the next level of their education — how to communicate their creative ideas to Dan and me."

The makeup session with Galvin and Flynn took place at Ocean Crest Elementary School, as did the dance and movement section, taught by Pamela Hansen and Christine Moehring of the tribal dance group Bandon Beledi.

"They taught gypsy and tribal dancing, and demonstrated in costumes," said Almich. "They also explained that their individual costumes not only reflected their tribe,

but also each dancer's favorite things in life. Christine, for example, had seashells on her costume because she loves the beach. Gypsies often have buttons on their costumes, because they use them to trade or to make jewelry."

The students were educated on the importance of being part of a group or tribe, while also being an individual.

"This adds character to their dance and presentation before the audience," said Almich.

The youths also learned about

■ See Workshop, Page A12

dancing to different types of music.

"This gave them a feel for how their bodies could move and tell a story through music," Almich explained. "Our three Harem Girls, Jordan and Haley Chandler, and Tessa Fuller, knew the music, and had rehearsal time available, so they came up with a routine that we've added to the show. Jordan and Haley take dance lessons at MarLo Dance Studio, so credit Maria (Merriam) for the training she's given the girls in movement and expression."

The Almichs taught the other sections of the August workshop — acting, costumes, sets, props, lighting and sound.

"We used formal scripts during the acting section," Almich said, "and the students also were put in impromptu situations. We challenged them with some improvisational exercises in which they formed groups, came up with an idea, then acted it out."

The students primed and painted some of the show's props, and also helped with costumes and sets.

"I designed the costumes around the actors' favorite colors," said Almich. "After they tried them on, they made suggestions, and so they had an influence on how their costumes will look. They also had ideas about what would look cool for some of the sets/props, and some of those were incorporated into the production."

New Artists received a grant from the Coos County Cultural Coalition that allowed the group to purchase two sets of stage lights and a controller. A private donation allowed New Artists to purchase a public address system. The lighting and sound equipment was set up in the Almichs' garage for the workshop and subsequent rehearsals, and will be used during the show's road productions.

"We have two young high school seniors who are going to run our sound (Amanda Fuller) and lighting (Brittney Converse)," Almich said, noting that the sound tech will use a CD to play the music for the show. "During the workshop, these two had the opportunity to learn the equipment as well as the flow of the play, so they can anticipate what the actors will be doing, and change for the next setup when required. They also had a chance to get acquainted with the cast. One of the fun things about this experience is that kids from four different cities are involved. The local participants have learned that their interest is shared by kids in other



Photo by Amy Moss Strong

Genie in a bottle

Chelsea Hill plays the comical genie in the New Artists production of "Aladdin Junior," which opens at 7 p.m. Friday at the Sprague Community Theater, featuring an all-youth cast of 30.

communities.

"I think the actors had fun and learned a lot. Having the lighting and sound equipment right in front of them piqued their interest. They were able to see how the sound and lighting technology works, and actually get hands-on, close-up experience."

In addition to running their own sound and lighting, the students also are taking their show on the road for the first time.

"Traveling the show is a whole new experience," Almich said. "This gives the kids the opportunity to travel and

"They were able to see how the sound and lighting technology works."

— Anita Almich

see different audiences, stages and their different amenities. They can see that theater can be done with a minimum level of equipment and lighting. It's basically up to them to convey their message and tell their story, regardless of the setting. It takes true acting to show total strangers that you have something to offer them in exchange for the cost of their ticket. Dan and I hope the kids will learn that the audience comes out to see something, and they're entitled to as nice and entertaining a performance as are the kids' own families who would attend the show here."

Almich added that, because of royalties, printing and other associated costs, New Artists is limiting each individual show to 150 seats, regardless of the capacity of the buildings.

"Every seat has a royalty associated with it and, since we average about a hundred people per show, we are limiting the number of tickets available to 150," she explained. "Hopefully, that will meet the challenge."

New Artists will save more than a thousand dollars by limiting the number of unused seats.

"Who knows? We may be able to expand that next time," Almich said.

Disney's "Aladdin Junior" runs Oct. 27 and 28 at 7 p.m., and Oct. 29 at 2 p.m., at the Sprague Community Theater in City Park. The show will play at the Sawdust Theatre in Coquille at 7 p.m. on Nov. 3 and 4, and at Pacific Auditorium in Reedsport at 7 p.m. on Nov. 10 and 11.

Admission at each venue is \$10 adults, \$8 seniors and \$5 students. Tickets are available at Bandon True Value Hardware and Radio Shack, Bandon Mercantile, Denny's Pizza in Coquille, and Reedsport Pharmacy and Reedsport Junior/Senior High School in Reedsport.

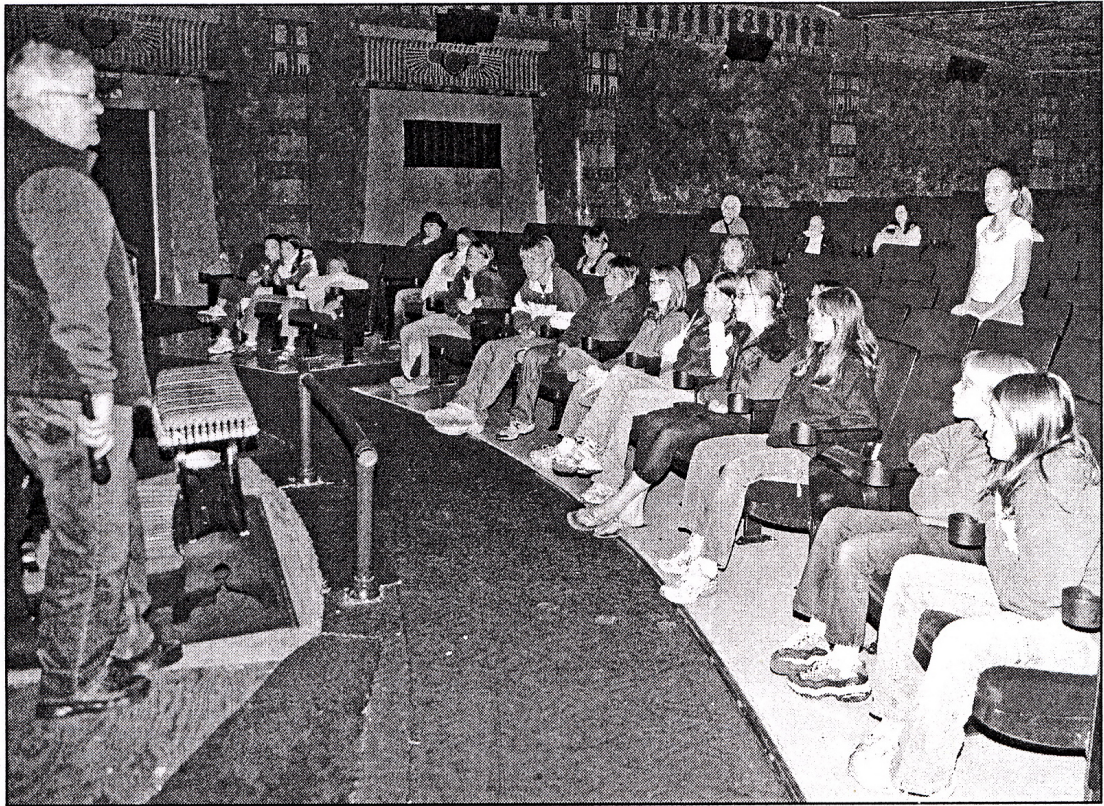
Almich added that she and her husband are already planning next year's theater camp.

"It will be entirely different and better," she said with a mischievous grin. "It will be more involved for the kids and their talents."

Theater history

Campers from the New Artists Productions theater camp learn about the history of the Egyptian Theatre during a field trip. The two-week day camp was provided free by New Artists' founders Dan and Anita Almich and culminated in an "Old Time Radio" production Saturday night at the Sprague Theater. About 25 children took part in the theater camp.

Contributed Photo
by Dan Almich



Camp like an Egyptian

New Artists campers tour theaters in Coos Bay, North Bend

By Anita Almich

Imagine stepping back in time to walk the aisles and hallways of actors from the 1920s and 1930s. Imagine hearing the pipe organ play to stories of old and the instruments that played the orchestral sounds emitted through the pipes, and imagining the sights on stage with background scenery that has been in existence for 85 years.

For 20 young campers and five adults, these imaginations became reality when they recently took a trip to the Bay Area with New Artists Productions to tour the Egyptian Theatre and Little Theatre on the Bay.

The first stop was the Egyptian Theatre, where Rich Shearer shared his knowledge about the theater, bringing history alive. Stories about the construction of the grand theatre, its usage during the vaudeville, silent movie, and talking movie periods, and, more recently,

through a long, labor-intensive facility restoration period, shed a whole new light on the facility.

The camp group was able to tour the pipe organ equipment room; walk on a stage constructed in the mid-1920s still showing the wear of the original wood planks; view scenery painted in Portland in the late 1920s and early 1930s and delivered to Marshfield (Coos Bay), for use in live theater; and, finally, listen to organ music fill the auditorium when a volunteer organist entertained the group.

Campers said the most memorable part of the tour of the Egyptian Theatre was actually seeing how the organ sounds were made in the pipe room, which contains pipes of all shapes and contours, cymbals, drums, bells, whistles, air movers, and horns — and then hearing them being played through the actual instrument. Other memories related to the history of the

building and its preservation. A better appreciation of the facility was truly felt that day, campers said.

The tour of Little Theatre on the Bay was also interesting and informative, the campers said. Teresa Erskine and Jeff Cragan were the guides through the old Liberty Theatre building and told of its history that dates back to the mid-1920s. The facility, like the Egyptian Theatre, offered vaudeville and silent movies in its early days; but for the past 60 years has offered live stage theatre. The building, like the Egyptian, is in dire need of repair and renovation.

At LTOB, the camp group toured the backstage area where they learned about the manually operated sandbag-weighted fly gallery system for scenery, toured the dressing rooms, green room, and covered orchestra pit, all below the stage area. The group also toured the second story that housed the cos-

tume room and lighting booth. Finally, the tour went outside to the newly constructed workshop building.

"The purpose of the trip was not to compare the capabilities of these two facilities with Bandon's Sprague Community Theater, but to illustrate to the kids that theater is performed in all types of setting and environments," Dan Almich said. "New Artists is looking at plays to present on these stages in the future to enhance the performance experience and education of our participants."

The Bandon Kiwanis Club made bus transportation for the tour possible and meals for the campers were provided through the Bandon School District lunch program.

"Without this support this educational field trip would not have been as successful," added Almich.

(Anita Almich is co-founder of New Artists Productions, along with her husband, Dan.)

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Scary!

Brianna Nevitt, 11, models a mask she made during theater workshop. Artwork helps students learn to be comfortable going outside the lines, according to workshop organizers.

Lessons for Life



Hands-on learning

Thirteen-year-old Meg Earls gets some help from makeup artist Gordon Freed as she works to apply makeup on Brianna Nevitt, 11, right. Melissa Berg, 15 (background right), tries out her new stage makeup skills on a classmate during local theater workshop last week at Ocean Crest Elementary School.

Teenagers gain real world skills while having fun, too

Story and photos by Steve McCasland

For many adults, acting, singing, dancing and painting are fun activities that can help them connect with friends and neighbors who have similar interests.

The same is true for younger people, although some of them are learning there are career opportunities in these fields for those who have the talent, drive and/or luck to make it happen.

For the past three weeks, some two dozen local youths in grades seven through 12 have been studying all phases of theatrical production during a three-week workshop presented by the non-profit New Artists Productions Inc.

New Artists founders Dan and Anita Almich created the organization several years ago in an attempt to promote musical performance opportunities for youths, Anita Almich explained.

"Our kids were involved in band, and we wanted to put together some shows that could help them and others advance," she said. "Working with the Sprague Community Theatre (as managers) provided the ideal opportunity for us to put on shows featuring young musicians and singers."

New Artists produced several concerts spotlighting youthful talent.

Then, a couple of years ago, the high school dropped its drama program.

"After that, we decided to try and come up with a performing arts program for youths that was similar to what the Oregon Coast Lab Band does for musicians," Almich said.

Thus, the High Tide Players was born in November 2002. The group has staged several plays, and last year offered its first theater workshop for youths.

Sally Ford, resident director for High Tide, brings decades of theatrical experience from New York's Broadway stages and elsewhere to the organization.

"Sally is not only the focal point as far as teaching goes, she also chooses and prepares the workshop course materials and the plays that will be staged later by these young people," said Almich.

Ford said her goal in the workshops is to bring knowledge to the children so that they can become involved with community theater groups.

"And if some of them have an interest, which some do, in going into acting — film, television or stage work — then we encourage them as to what type of college they should go to," Ford said.

Workshop participants have been meeting four afternoons a week at Ocean Crest Elementary School to act, sing, dance and study makeup, stage management, set design and other phases of theater.

"Kids love to pretend to be other people. This program allows them to be creative and imaginative — to open up and color beyond the lines, with no boundaries to personality or creativity," Almich said.

Part of the message of the workshop is that the actors on stage aren't the only important people.

"You also have sets, makeup, costumes, lighting, publicity, the janitor and so on," said Almich.

The workshop also gives producers insight as to who might be a good set artist, or scenery designer, for example. And it helps create a pool of players that the Bandon Playhouse can draw from.

Alex Sylvester said he's enjoyed attending his first theater workshop.

"They're teaching us about acting, and we get to spend time on our improv work," the 14-year-old said. "We're learning how to do our own makeup, which is really important. And we're learning about what the stage crew does."

He feels that in makeup and other areas of theater production, "It's better if we're self-sufficient. It's much better to learn how than to have others do it for you."

Meg Earls, 13, said she especially enjoyed learning to do stage makeup, but is interested in other areas of theater, too.

"Overall, it's helping me to understand all the different aspects of theater," she said. "And it's fun to do."

In addition to Ford, other workshop teachers include Gordon Freed of Coos Bay, a longtime professional makeup artist who has worked with many top television and movie stars; Ruthanne McSurdy-Wong, who has considerable experience in scenery and sets with the Bandon Playhouse and in other venues; and Gary Dawson, who does lighting, special effects and sound for the Sprague.

New Artists held auditions earlier this week for *The Wizard of Oz*, a show that will open Nov. 12 and run for two weekends. Workshop participants also are expected to perform in the group's Down Home Christmas Show, scheduled Dec. 18-19.

And bigger ideas are simmering for next summer's workshop. Ford plans to have a 10-day camp covering sets, painting, props, theater and stage etiquette, lighting and more.

"We'll have a staff of seven or eight covering the vast functions of the theater, providing them with the knowledge needed to put on a show at the end of the workshop," Ford said, adding that the number of participants doubled from last year.

Both Ford and the Almichs said that their goals would be



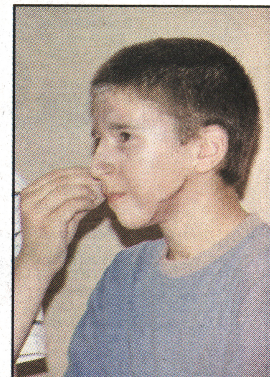
Fun with makeup

Workshop students refine their theatrical makeup skills with help from pro Gordon Freed. Standing, from left, are Freed, Brianna Nevitt, Alissa Taylor, Melissa Berg, Larkin Madden and Mary Lane. Guinea pigs, sitting from left, are Carson Hickox, Clarissa Castaldi, Emma Fisher and Amanda Wickstrom.



Master of disguise

Makeup artist Gordon Freed has many options, above, in his extensive bag of tricks. Right, Benjamin Rich, 12, receives an age adjustment from fellow theater workshop attendee John Castaldi, 13.

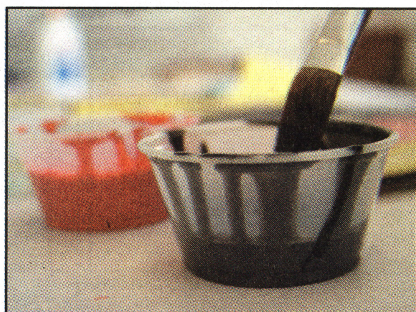


met if even one local student eventually found a career on Broadway or in film or television.

"We want someone to succeed and follow through on a dream they had, and to know we had a small impact on that," Almich said.

Meanwhile, back at Ocean Crest, the students were laughing, working, acting, singing, dancing, learning and painting each other's faces.

A smiling Anita Almich added with a twinkle in her eye: "Once they hear the applause for the first time, we've got 'em!"



Let's color!

Painting helps students' creativity come to the forefront at New Artists Productions theater workshop.

New Artists theater camp

Old Time Radio is back by popular demand. The theme for this year's New Artists Productions youth theater day camp will focus on scripts from the "Father Knows Best" and "Our Miss Brooks" radio shows of the 1940s and 1950s. Camp will be offered over two weeks, from 1 to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, July 21 through Aug. 1, to campers ages 7 through 18, then culminate with a performance at the Sprague Community Theater at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 2.

"This is our sixth year of camp as we invite campers to learn more about theater and experiment with several areas of interest to every age of camper," said Dan Almich, who with his wife, Anita, founded New Artists Productions.

"This year, we are going to focus on 'telling the whole story' through movement, dialogue, management of microphones and acting techniques in regard to presenting live radio. A new element to this year's camp is the creation and professional production of the commercials presented during the show," added Almich.

Other camp subject areas covered are youth theater activities from around the world, short script reading and enactment, acting with emotion, the review of the varied roles portrayed by Doris Day, plus the study of monologues from famous scenes in the movies.

On Friday, July 25, the campers will take a field trip to the Coos Bay to tour the Egyptian Theatre and Little Theatre on the Bay.

Bus transportation to the Bay Area is sponsored by the Bandon Kiwanis Club and each camper will be provided a sack lunch through the school district food program.

"The theme of Old Time Radio is always a favorite, as many in our audience entertained themselves by listening to the radio shows from the 1930s, '40s, and '50s," Dan Almich said. "That was the entertainment at night if your family didn't have a television set."

The performance at the Sprague Community Theater is described as an opportunity for the baby-boomers and older generations to relive radio and, for those who only knew these shows from television, to experience radio.

As in years past, New Artists' youth theater camp, as well as its year-round program, are free to all who participate. Camp will be held at the New Artists facility on Trout Pond Lane. Registration begins on the first day of camp.

For more information, call 347-2517.

New Artists Productions is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of youth theater activities in the community. All donations are 100 percent tax-deductible.

New Artists celebrates 10th season

By Geneva Miller
Contributing Writer

After 10 years, New Artists Productions, under the direction of Dan and Anita Almich, is still growing and changing alongside its student performers.

Dan says many of Bandon's youngsters live and breathe to perform.

"You just never know what's going to spark the kids," said Anita.

The Almichs have been supporting the arts in Bandon for years, starting when their own sons were in school and learning to play jazz instruments. The couple joined the Bandon Lions club and helped raise money and then the walls of the Sprague Community Theater, which they also managed.

"Once you spend five years on a project, it's hard to let it go," said Dan.

Anita says working with local students is like watching her own children grow up. She sees the students taking performance seriously.

■ See New Artists, A8



Contributed Photo by Scott Peters

The lights, the crowds ...

Annie (Zeta Hay), Grace Farrell (Jeneveve Winchell) and Oliver Warbucks (Nicholas Zamora) enjoy the sights of New York City on an outing during "Annie Junior." The New Artists Productions show opens Thursday, April 8, at the Sprague Community Theater for six shows over four days.



File Photo by Amy Moss Strong

Ten years of New Artists shows

"James and the Giant Peach" was staged by New Artists Productions in May 2006.

New Artists

■ from Page A1

"The theater has provided a permanent venue for people to try things," said Anita. "It's really opened the imaginations of the people who use the facility."

New Artists started in 2000 with a series of concerts that brought audiences to the newly built Sprague and put student performers on the stage. Then New Artists joined ranks with Bandon Playhouse to produce "New Wrinkles, Old Wrinkles," a coming-of-age meets mid-life-crisis musical comedy.

According to Anita, the program really took off when local students and families began planning their schedules around the New Artists calendar. The Almichs say the students are always challenging their directors to find new projects.

New Artists Productions is a nonprofit performing arts company providing performance and training opportunities for students grades one through 12. Participation is free, and students are encouraged to explore all aspects of performance, including taking turns behind the curtain, running technical operations and building sets.

New Artists kicked off its 10th anniversary season with the annual "I Want to Be a Star" variety show. "Annie Junior" will be presented at the Sprague Theater next Thursday through Sunday, April 8-11, with six shows.

Programs and field trips also are scheduled throughout the



File Photo by Amy Moss Strong

New Artist Productions staged its first original play, "Monday at Noon," in October 2007 at the Sprague Community Theater.

year.

For more information, visit the New Artists Web site,

www.newartistsprod.com or call Dan and Anita Almich at 541-347-2517.



Photo by Amy Moss Strong

Shakespeare at Chetco

New Artists Productions will perform a condensed version of "Twelfth Night" tonight during Chetco Federal Credit Union's "A Night With The Stars," a free family event at 5:30 p.m. in the Bandon Chetco parking lot. Pictured, back row from left: Brianna Wilson, Nicholas Zamora, Tessa Fuller, Emily Wilson, Jeneveve Winchell, Autumn Moss-Strong and Destyni Fuller. Front row, from left: David Vincent, Daniel Undell, Natalie Vincent and Olivia Kincaid.

New Artists tackle Shakespeare, 'Twelfth Night' for Chetco event

BY CHIP DOMBROWSKI

For Bandon Western World

All the world's a stage, and groups staging Shakespeare shows sometimes use any corner of the world they can find.

Parks.

Plazas on college campuses.

Parking lots?

New Artists Productions has staged plays in venues including the Sprague Community Theater, the Harbortown Events Center and the Ocean Crest Elementary School gym.

For its first Shakespeare production, though, the group is working in a new location: the parking lot of Chetco Federal Credit Union in Bandon.

For one performance only, the group will stage an abridged version of "Twelfth Night" during Chetco's A Night Under the Stars tonight.

The free event, which includes musical performances by violinist Nyke Van Wyk and Brookings singer Kayla Hamm and an hors d'oeuvres buffet by McFarlin's, begins at 5:30 p.m.

The goal is simply community involvement, said Raleen Shrum, assistant manager of Chetco's Bandon branch.

"Chetco is pretty proud of how much community involvement we have at all of our branches," Shrum said. "This is our first opportunity to do this in Bandon."

The credit union has been a frequent sponsor of New Artists shows, so director Anita Almich was happy to participate. Chetco manager Jodi Barron asked for Shakespeare, nudging New Artists to try something they hadn't yet done on their own.

"For us, it's a great introduction to Shakespeare," Almich said.

Almich found a middle school-level adaptation of "Twelfth Night" that for the most part preserves Shakespeare's language and style, while modernizing some words and phrases and heavily con-



Sebastian (Autumn Moss-Strong) draws his sword against Sir Toby (Daniel Undell) and Sir Andrew (David Vincent) in "Twelfth Night."

densing the five-act play to 45 minutes.

The addition of a narrator (Olivia Kinkaid) further simplifies the play.

Among the challenges for the young actors, Almich said, are staging in a narrower space, projecting for an outdoor audience and strictly memorizing the lines. Some company members have grown accustomed to a liberal policy on ad-libbing that won't apply to this play.

"With Shakespeare, you can't do that," Almich said. "It means something completely different."

The play

Fearing her twin brother is dead, Viola (Tessa Fuller) disguises herself as a boy and assumes his place as a new page to Duke Orsino (Emily Wilson).

While the duke pines for Lady Olivia (Jeneveve Winchell), she takes notice of his page — bad news for Viola, but great for Sebastian (Autumn Moss-Strong), who's very much alive.

Olivia's friends and servants (Daniel Undell, David Vincent, Natalie Vincent, Nicholas Zamora and Destyni Fuller), as well as the duke's (Brianna Wilson), also get caught up in the mess.

Shakespeare ^{at} the bank

Chetco, New Artists present 'Twelfth Night,' more, in CFCU parking lot

BY CHIP DOMBROWSKI
Entertainment Editor

BANDON — All the world's a stage, and groups staging Shakespeare shows sometimes use any corner of the world they can find.

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group is working in a new location: the parking lot of Chetco Federal Credit Union in Bandon.

Twelfth Night

New Artists Productions
Chetco Federal Credit Union,
1010 First St.
S.E., Bandon

When: 5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 26

The bard abridged

For one performance only, the group will stage an abridged version of "Twelfth Night" during Chetco's A Night Under the Stars on Thursday, Aug. 26.

The free event, which includes musical performances by violinist Nyke Van Wyk and Brookings singer Kayla Hamm and an hors d'oeuvres buffet, begins at 5:30 p.m.

The goal is simply community involvement, said Raleen Shrum, assistant manager of Chetco's Bandon branch, located next to the former VA clinic.

"Chetco is pretty proud of how much community involvement we have at all of our branches," Shrum said. "This is our first opportunity to do this in Bandon."

The credit union has been a frequent sponsor of New Artists shows, so director Anita Almich was happy to participate. Chetco manager Jodi Barron asked for Shakespeare, nudging New Artists to try something they hadn't yet done on their own.



World Photo by Amy Moss Strong

Olivia (Jeneveve Winchell, center right) and Duke Orsino (Emily Wilson) react to seeing Viola (Tessa Fuller, right), whom they know as Cesario, with Sebastian (Autumn Moss-Strong, left) in New Artists Productions' "Twelfth Night."

"For us, it's a great introduction to Shakespeare," Almich said.

Almich found a middle school-level adaptation of "Twelfth Night" that for the most part preserves Shakespeare's language and style, while modernizing some words and phrases and heavily condensing the five-act play to 45 minutes.

The addition of a narrator (Olivia Kinkaid) further simplifies the play.

Memory a must

Among the challenges for the young actors, Almich said, are staging in a narrower space, projecting for an outdoor audience and strictly memorizing the lines. Some company members have grown accustomed to a liberal

policy on ad-libbing that won't apply to this play.

"With Shakespeare, you can't do that," Almich said. "It means something completely different."

Another challenge for cast member Tessa Fuller is going back and forth between her female character and the boy disguise she assumes. While her sister Destyni and Jeneveve Winchell both have plenty of experience playing boys in New Artists shows, it's the first time for 12-year-old Tessa.

"Sometimes I have to change my voice mid-scene because I address the audience as a girl," she said.

Regarding the staging, Almich said the group's experience at the Harbortown Events Center, where the audience sits much

closer to the action, would help.

"The open air is going to be fun for everybody," Almich said.

The play

Fearing her twin brother is dead, Viola (Tessa Fuller) disguises herself as a boy and assumes his place as a new page to Duke Orsino (Emily Wilson).

While the duke pines for Lady Olivia (Jeneveve Winchell), she takes notice of his page — bad news for Viola, but great for Sebastian (Autumn Moss-Strong), who's very much alive.

Olivia's friends and servants (Daniel Undell, David Vincent, Natalie Vincent, Nicholas Zamora and Destyni Fuller), as well as the duke's (Brianna Wilson), also get caught up in the mess.

Falling for it

New Artists go slapstick for 'Maligned Mannequin' opening in Bandon

By CHIP DOMBROWSKI
Entertainment Editor

BANDON — Lieutenant Clinger needs a helmet.

New Artists Productions directors Dan and Anita Almich expect their cast will be fully ready for tonight's premiere of "The Case of the Maligned Mannequin."

But if one particular cast member has any trouble remembering his lines, there's a ready-made excuse: He can say he hit his head one too many times.

The original play, written by Dan Almich, is a slapstick comedy, full of slips and bumps — most of which befall Lt. Clinger, played by Russel Hay.

"It will be funny," Almich said. "Russel worked hard at walking into doors."

Almich wrote the play to provide material fitting the demographics of his cast — 10 girls and two boys, all middle school age — because "they don't write plays like that." Last year, he adapted an Agatha Christie play in "Monday at Noon" for the same reason, but this time he didn't want help.

Almich also produced the play's soundtrack — effectively the 13th cast member, as much of the humor plays off the "Pink Panther"-inspired sound effects, operated by Zeta Hay.

Timing is the critical element, when choreography must match sound effects, and Almich said it was harder to teach than he expected.

"We're not theater teachers, even though we're getting more skillful at what we do," he said. "But we have goals for the students in our program. One of our goals was to teach them about the Laurel and Hardy style of slapstick comedy."

With the young cast and the style of humor, "The Case of the Maligned Mannequin" feels like "The Suite Life of Zack and Cody," although the setting is "90210" and the plot is murder mystery. The play premieres tonight at the Sprague Community Theater in Bandon.

At the St. Vincent Finishing School for Girls in Beverly Hills, the pressure for grades is high. When science teacher Ms. Anna Tomy (Destyni Fuller) offers a field trip only to students who get A's on the biology exam, five of the students decide to cheat. Kate (Hope Hay) finds the answer book and shares it with Angie (Kinzi Silburn), Sabrina (Tessa Fuller), Ilene (Shelby Mears) and Dee (Emma Wampler). But they exclude Victoria (Jeneveve Winchell), a prototypical "mean girl," who doesn't get along with the others.

After completing the biology unit and preparing to shift to anatomy, Ms. Tomy asks headmistress Ms. Stern (Katie Sands) for permission to buy an anatomical model for the classroom. Touting removable organs and joints that simulate human movements, Ms. Tomy lobbies for the \$650 expenditure, but money



World Photos by Steve McCasland

Nurse Pane (Robin Hill) tries to revive teacher Ms. Tomy (Destyni Fuller), who fainted after discovering the body of one of her students, with the help of some other students (Shelby Mears, left, Tessa Fuller and Hope Hay) in "The Case of the Maligned Mannequin" at the Sprague Community Theater.



The ghost of Victoria (Jeneveve Winchell, left) follows along as detectives Clinger (Russel Hay, right) and Trotter (Thaddeus Miller) synchronize their watches. In comedy, timing is everything.

is tighter than one would expect for a ritzy private school. Considering a pending visit by the school's board, Ms. Stern approves the mannequin and orders it on

same-day delivery.

The students have a problem of their own as they realize Victoria found the answer book in Kate's bag. When Victoria

asks to meet privately with Ms. Tomy that night, their fears are confirmed.

Kate waits in the classroom for Victoria, planning to knock her out and take back the book. But as Kate makes her move, Victoria trips and falls to her death, hitting her head on Ms. Tomy's desk.

Exhibiting little concern over the turn of events, Kate hides the body in the unopened mannequin crate but fails to find the stolen book in her haste to exit before the teacher arrives. Meanwhile, Victoria is left to argue justice with her guardian angel (Chelsea Hill).

The next morning, when the body is found and the school nurse (Robin Hill) can't help, the police are called to the scene. Lt. Clinger and Detective Trotter (Thaddeus Miller) launch their investigation, which involves falling down a lot. Considering the nature of Victoria's death, these falls could actually serve as clues to fingering the slippery floor.

But that would be too easy, and nothing ever comes easy for these accident-prone detectives.

The play runs through Oct. 26. Performances are at 7 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and at 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$10, \$8 for seniors and \$5 for students.



Contributed Photos by Scott Peters

Demonstrating their hard-knock life, orphans (from left, Paige Smith, Victoria Moehring, Mikaela Peters, Emma Wampler, Zeta Hay, Rose Garrett, Emily Wilson and Aria Giovanetti) mop the floor of their room in "Annie Junior," a New Artists Productions show at the Sprague Community Theater in Bandon.

Stitching smiles

A girl's dreams come true — both onstage and off — in 'Annie'

BY CHIP DOMBROWSKI
Entertainment Editor

BANDON — For Zeta Hay, "Annie" isn't just her first lead role.

It's her life's dream.

"When I first saw it in first grade, I fell in love with the role," said Hay, who celebrated her 13th birthday at rehearsal Monday. "I said, 'One day, I'm gonna be her.' My dream is coming true."

It will next week, anyway, when "Annie Junior" begins its four-day run Thursday at the Sprague Community Theater.

For New Artists Productions directors Dan and Anita Almich, bringing a kid's dreams to life is just another day on the job — something the retired couple has been doing in

Bandon for the past 10 years (see sidebar).

The Almichs organize their projects around their young performers' interests and encourage them to get involved in other aspects of staging.

Another cast member, Emma Wampler, serves as the show's choreographer.

Though Hay clearly enjoys the spotlight, she's also found that lead roles have a downside — more lines to memorize and less time for goofing off backstage.

Because of scheduling conflicts, playing Annie also meant Hay had to sit out the recent Bandon Playhouse production of "The Sound of Music," which involved every other member of her family. Nevertheless, it wasn't a hard choice.

"I would much rather be in 'Annie,'" she said.

Her enthusiasm for the show runs deep. At her old



Annie (Zeta Hay) shares her sense of hope with her recently acquired dog, Sandy (Olivia Wood-Collins), as they sing "Tomorrow."



Laundry guy Bundles (Thaddeus Miller) takes a moment from his work to flirt with orphanage director Miss Hannigan (Destyni Fuller).

school in Minnesota before her family moved to Bandon four years ago, Hay and her friends would sing "Tomorrow" as they ran around the track. Sometimes the song makes her tear up.

"Whenever I sing it, it reminds me of my old friends," Hay said. "It also reminds me how great living in Bandon is."

The musical also features

Destyni Fuller, 15, who is often cast as the villain in New Artists shows, as the cruel Miss Hannigan.

"(Villain roles) kind of come easily to me," Fuller said. "I'm used to having sisters, and we get into fights, so I just think about that."

Though past performances

A decade of New Artists

BY GENEVA MILLER
Special to The World

After 10 years, New Artists Productions, under the direction of Dan and Anita Almich, is still growing and changing alongside its student performers.

Dan says many of Bandon's youngsters live and breathe to perform.

"You just never know what's going to spark the kids," said Anita.

The Almichs have been supporting the arts in Bandon for years, starting when their own sons were in school and learning to play jazz instruments. The couple joined the Bandon Lions club and helped raise money and then the walls of the Sprague Community Theater, which they also managed.

Anita says working with local students is like watching her own children grow up. She sees the students taking performance seriously.

"The theater has provided a permanent venue for people to try things," said Anita. "It's really opened the imaginations of the people who use the facility."

New Artists started in 2000 with a series of concerts that brought audiences to the newly built Sprague and put student performers on the stage.

According to Anita, the program really took off when local students and families began planning their schedules around the New Artists calendar. The Almichs say the students are always challenging their directors to find new projects.

New Artists Productions is a nonprofit performing arts company providing free performance and training opportunities for students grades one through 12.

Annie Jr.

New Artists Productions
Sprague Community
Theater, Bandon

Dates: April 8-11

Times: 7 p.m. Thursday
and Friday, 1 and 4
p.m. Saturday, and
2 and 5 p.m. Sunday

Tickets: \$10, \$8 for
seniors, \$5 students.



World Photos by Amy Moss Strong

The body of Girl Scout leader Rita Jones (Larkin Madden) is examined by housekeeper Mrs. Murphy (Clarissa Castaldi, top center) and Scouts (clockwise from bottom left Tessa Fuller, Jeneveve Winchell, Destyni Fuller and Hope Hay) in "Monday at Noon," a New Artists Productions show opening tonight at the Sprague Community Theater in Bandon. The murder mystery show runs through Oct. 27.

'Tween' terror

A serial killer picks off a pack of Girl Scouts one by one in New Artists' 'Monday at Noon,' opening at Sprague

By CHIP DOMBROWSKI
Entertainment Editor

BANDON — It's pretty hard to find a children's play written for a cast of 14 girls and one boy.

Most are adapted from classic stories populated with an abundance of boys, and the few that slant female, like "Little Women," tend to have few parts.

After seven years of looking and settling for creative casting, Dan Almich came up with a solution: He wrote his own play, "Monday at Noon," which opens tonight at the Sprague Community Theater in Bandon.

"It was written because we have so many girls in our program and so few boys," said Almich, the co-founder of New Artists Productions, which offers free drama education to Bandon youths. "I'm always asking the girls to play boys or someone much older."

Almich said the idea for the play came out of a group discussion at New Artists' summer workshop, which provided a frame that he combined with the plot of Agatha Christie's "And Then There Were None."

"I'm not an original writer," Almich said, shrugging off the imagination necessary to create all new characters.

Almich replaced Christie's troubled adults with a troop of Girl Scouts — unusual suspects for a murder mystery. There's also a different ending, allowing for a slightly higher number of survivors than Christie's title indicates.

A narrator, Omega the Timekeeper (Liza-May Skeie), resets the clock at the beginning of each scene as the play progresses through the 72-hour adventure of Girl Scout Troop 599.

Cathy Jones (Destyni Fuller), whose tribal heritage entitles her family to exclusive use of uninhabited Indian Island, has arranged for her troop to stay on the island for a fun-filled weekend of outdoor activities and earning merit badges. After departing the mainland at noon Friday, the 11 girls will be stuck on the island — two hours by boat from Oregon's North Coast — with no way of communicating with the outside world until the ferry returns to pick them up at noon Monday.

Four days before the trip, a few of the girls gather to pack with Kim (Jeneveve



The killer prepares to stab Nancy (Robin Hill), who is carrying a candlestick to defend herself. A variety of weapons are used in the murder mystery play "Monday at Noon."

Winchell), who is both committed enough to preparedness to make packing so far in advance not seem too ridiculous and genial enough to make plausible the others' attendance at her packing party. Between school, diligent homework and resume-building extracurriculars, she'll probably need the remainder of the intervening three days to get through several volumes of "The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook."

Others packing with Kim are Beth (Raven Braun), whose many phobias would probably keep her home from a rugged camping trip if not for the security wise Kim provides; chronic complainer Ann (Zeta Hay), an 80-year-old woman trapped in a 10-year-old's body who will be lugging a bag full of pharmaceuticals for whatever discomforts arise; and gossip Margaret (Rose Garrett), who needs captive ears while she dishes on the other girls in the troop. She's not looking forward to so much time with "stuck-up" Janet (Ashley Crabtree) and "know-it-all" Nancy (Robin Hill), but they'll probably be busy with other popular girls like Alicia (Alaina Russell) and Bonnie (Chelsea Hill).

Meanwhile, Cathy gives instructions to handyman Mr. Murphy (Russell Hay) and cook Mrs. Murphy (Clarissa

Castaldi), who will staff Eagle's Nest Lodge, her family's vacation home, during the trip. The only other adult supervision will be from Scout leader Mrs. Jones (Larkin Madden), no relation to Cathy.

Cathy says she wants everything to be perfect while all her friends visit, but it's not long after their arrival that everything goes wrong. At dinner the first night, one girl chokes; the next morning, two more are found dead, overdosed on sleeping pills and drowned in the bathtub. None of the bereaved girls has an appetite, except Pat (Tessa Fuller), who's always hungry.

With so many tragic accidents in so little time, Mrs. Jones wonders whether the deaths are really accidental. But Cathy assures them no one else could be on the island, leading Erin (Hope Hay) to finger Mr. Murphy as the only suspect.

But after he meets a brutal end and the other adults are among four more victims, the remaining six girls are left to face the probability that the killer is one of them. And with 26 hours until the boat arrives, they'll have to find a way to survive, even as suspicion tears them apart.

Directed by Almich and his wife, Anita Almich, the show runs through Oct. 27. Performances are at 7 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Tickets are \$10, \$8 for seniors and \$5 for students.



World Photos by Amy Moss Strong

Chinese soldiers (Nathan Malamud, left, Natlie Vincent, David Neel, Thaddeus Graham-Miller and Olivia Kinkaid) dress as women for a sneak attack in New Artists Productions' "Mulan Junior" at the Sprague Community Theater in Bandon.

Dressed for battle

A girl fights tradition to bring China into the 16th century in 'Mulan'

BY CHIP DOMBROWSKI
The World

BANDON — The song "Reflection" can take people places — especially if they can sing it well.

Within a week of recording the epic power ballad for the "Mulan" soundtrack, Christina Aguilera landed a record deal; 18 months later, she had a Grammy.

For several Bay Area Teen Idol contestants over the years, those brave enough to take on the song tend to be met with one of two fates: a top score or swift elimination.

Mulan Junior

New Artists Productions
Sprague Community
Theater, Bandon

Dates: July 8-17

Times: 7 p.m. Fridays
and Saturdays, 2 p.m.
Sundays

Tickets: \$10, \$8 seniors,
\$5 students

For Emma Wampler, so far it's just gotten her the lead in New Artists Productions' "Mulan Junior," which opens tonight at the Sprague Community Theater. "Mulan" was written for Emma," director Anita

Almich said. "She's the only one who can sing 'Reflection.'"

"What Emma has is the feeling behind the words. It's a natural delivery. I don't think she has to search for it."

The song is a standout moment in the show. The New Artists production calls special attention to it by adding a dance that Wampler, 15, performs. That part of the scene plays out in Mulan's imagination.

"It's supposed to be how she thinks of herself," said Wampler, who developed all of the show's choreography. "She's more beautiful than she feels. She sees herself as sort of a failure."

The dance was Dan Almich's idea. He discussed the role with Wampler two years ago, wait-



Mulan (Emma Wampler, center) gets a makeover from her grandmother (Autumn Moss-Strong) and some hairdressers (Olivia Kinkaid, right, and Natalie Jones).



Mushu (Mikaela Peters) watches as Mulan embarks on her journey.

ing to produce the show until she took a break from dance classes to make the time commitment for her first lead role.

"She's probably got more talent than any girl we have in this company," he said.

Teaching her choreography to the other 28 members of the cast also meant putting in more work than anyone, he added.

Fellow dance student Thaddeus Graham-Miller, who plays Mulan's love interest, appreciates the choreography.

"Sometimes it's like I'm working with professionals," Graham-Miller said. "Sometimes it's just a bunch of kids having fun."

His favorite part though, is the sword he carries as a captain in the Chinese army. Wampler's, meanwhile, is the comedy surrounding her character's clumsy initial attempts at pulling off her disguise as a boy.

While the Broadway Junior show is based on the Disney movie, which Wampler considers one of her favorites, there are many differences.



The spirits of Mulan's ancestors (from left, Talia DeAndrea, Emily Wilson, David Vincent, Danica Stys and Nicholas Zamora) pray in their temple.

MULAN

Continued from Page A1

Some early scenes and about half the songs are new in the stage version.

One of the more interesting similarities is the character of Mushu, a dragon sent by Mulan's ancestors to watch over her during her army escapade. Taking on a role voiced by Eddie Murphy in the movie, Mikaela Peters manages to sound like a talking Disney animal.

"I just wanted to have a twang and be different," said Peters, who is known in the New Artists crowd for her facility with accents.

The show is also the stage debut for 11 new company members from the Bay Area who joined after a workshop for homeschool students at the Celebration Center. Anita Almich said she's enjoyed watching the newcomers meet and interact with Wampler.

"An immediate respect

The cast

The cast also includes Kyle Overstreet, Elias DeAndrea, Hannah Blackard, Kylie Gomes, Ellie Hohmann, Noah Hohmann, Isabella Jones, Natalie Jones, Miranda Peters, Marisa Smith and Olivia Wood-Collins.

was developed on both sides," Almich said.

The play

Because Mulan (Emma Wampler) is deemed not feminine enough to land a husband, her family (Russell Jones, Natalie Vincent and Autumn Moss-Strong) and her ghostly ancestors (Nicholas Zamora, Danica Stys, David Vincent, Emily Wilson and Talia DeAndrea) fear she will never bring them honor.

But as the Huns (Kayla Dugan, Kyla Harris, Kailynn Blackard) invade China, an official (Dustin Wilson) announces a bizarre, inefficient military draft, demanding the services of

one male from every family, even if a family's only available male is an old man who walks with a limp.

Stealing her father's armor, Mulan reports for duty as Ping at a camp led by Capt. Shang (Thaddeus Graham-Miller), where she earns the respect of her fellow soldiers (David Neel, Olivia Kinkaid,

Nathan Malamud and Natalie Vincent).

Fearing greater dishonor, the ancestors dispatch their dragon lackey (Mikaela Peters) to watch over Mulan.

Chip Dombrowski can be reached at 541-269-1222, ext. 243, or at cdombrowski@theworldlink.com.